How to take a Good Photo?
&
How not to get scared in a Modern Art Museum?
What Makes a Great Picture?

© Robert Doisneau, 1955

With many slides from Yan Ke and Fredo Durand,
as annotated by Tamara Berg

CS194: Intro to Computer Vision and Comp. Photo
Alexei Efros, UC Berkeley, Fall 2022
Photography 101: the **where** and **when**

- Composition
  - Framing
  - Rule of Thirds
  - Leading Lines
  - Textures and Patterns
  - Simplicity

- Lighting
  - Light Direction
  - Color coordination / balance
  - Sunny vs. cloudy
  - “Golden Hour”
  - B&W to focus attention
  - (sur) realism
Framing

“Photography is all about framing. We see a subject -- and we put a frame around it. Essentially, that is photography when all is said and done.”

-- from photo.blorge.com
Frame serves several purposes:

1. It gives the image depth

2. If used correctly, framing can draw the eye of the viewer of an interest to a particular part of the scene.

3. Framing can bring a sense of organization or containment to an image.

4. Framing can add context to a shot.

http://digital-photography-school.com/blog/frame-your-images/
Examples of nice framing

http://flickr.com/photos/paulosacramento/226545698/
http://flickr.com/photos/chrisbeach/13868545/
http://flickr.com/photos/74531485@N00/929270814/
http://flickr.com/photos/freakdog/223117229/
http://flickr.com/photos/cdm/253805482/
Rules of Thirds

http://www.photo96.com/blog/?p=371
Other examples
Don’t center, especially for motion

By Fredo Durand
Don’t center, especially for motion

By Fredo Durand
... or do center

By Fredo Durand
More examples
Textures and Patterns
Simplicity

Prof - Obvious what one should be looking at ie easy to separate subject from the background. Snap – unstructured, busy, filled with clutter.

“Look Into” by Josh Brown @ Flickr
Simplicity

“alien flower” by Josef F. Stuefer @ Flickr
Simplicity

“Waiting in line!” by Imapix @ Flickr
B&W for Simplicity
B&W for Simplicity

Photo by A. A. Efros
…but not always
...but not always
Crop for Simplicity

By Fredo Durand
If your pictures aren't good enough, you're not close enough" — Robert Capa

By Fredo Durand
Clean Backgrounds

By Fredo Durand
Simplicity for Portraits

https://vimeo.com/29722267
And now, all together…
Get low

Try to be at eye level

Bad

Better

By Fredo Durand
Bad angles

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8EmRZO9fwvk&feature=youtu.be

By Fredo Durand
Eye level

By Fredo Durand
Or really get high

As usual, follow a rule or really break it.

By Fredo Durand
Front Lighting
Side Lighting
Back Lighting
Complementary colors (of opposite hue on color wheel)
Go in the shade

Light is more diffuse

Bad

Better

By Fredo Durand
Overcast days are the best

Just don’t put the sky in the frame

The weather conditions

The pictures

Other overcast-day pictures

By Fredo Durand
Bottom line

Don't get married on a sunny day!

By Fredo Durand
Cloudy day

By Fredo Durand
Best time of day: sunset & sunrise

+/- 1 hour

“Golden hours”

Night photography: always near sunset/sunrise
  • because of nice diffuse light

Mid day: often not great

less than 1 hour after sunrise/before sunset

During sunset or sunrise

After sunset

By Fredo Durand
“Golden Hour”
During sunset/sunrise

After sunset

By Fredo Durand
After sunset: blue hour

By Fredo Durand
Blue Hour (Russian River)

Photo by A. A. Efros
(Sur) Realism

“Golden Gate Bridge at Sunset” by Buzz Andersen @ Flickr

“Golden Gate 3” by Justin Burns @ Flickr
(Sur) Realism

“Somewhere Only We Know Prt2 (sic)” by Aki Jinn @ Flickr
Anyone can take great pictures...
I am a sucky photographer…
…but I am a pretty good photo critic!

http://flickr.com/photos/aaefros/

# of my Paris photos on Flickr: 32
Total # of my Paris photos: ~1250
The Postmodern Photographer

The Old Days: a pre-process
- Load film
- Find subject
- Position camera
- Set all the settings “just right”
- Take a deep breath…
- …Press button!

The New Digital Days: a post-process
- Get a 16 GB memory cartridge
- Take pictures like there is no tomorrow!!!
- …
- Back home, spend hours of agony trying to find 1-2 good ones
Lucky Imaging
Being Comfortable with Modern/Cont. Art

Pablo Picasso
The Guitar Player (1911)

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Simplistic Art PCA

Some “Principal Components” of Art:

• Cute ideas / illusions / clever tricks

• Direct Visceral Pleasure

• Familiarity / Nostalgia

• Art-Historical “Context”
Cute Ideas / Illusions / Clever Tricks
Salvador Dali

“Gala Contemplating the Mediterranean Sea, which at 30 meters becomes the portrait of Abraham Lincoln”, 1976
Scott Kelly and Ben Polkinghorne
Direct Visceral Pleasure
Jan van Eyck, *The Arnolfini Marriage* (c.1434)
Mark Rothko
Familiarity / Nostalgia
© Michael Galinsky, 1989
(from “Malls Across America”)
Edward Hopper
Alberto Giacometti
Art-Historical “Context”
Between Scylla and Charybdis: Navigating the Cost of College

February 17, 2017

By Geoffrey L. Brackett

One of my favorite episodes in Homer’s Odyssey is one of the most fearsome. It involves the sailing between the mysterious cave-dwelling monster Scylla and the terrifying, ship-destroying whirlpool known as Charybdis. There is something about having to manage two supernatural threats at once that makes Odysseus’ journey that much more difficult.
Still Chums? Cruz Says Trump Jumped the Shark

The political bromance between GOP presidential hopefuls Donald Trump and U.S. Sen. Ted Cruz appeared to be unraveling Tuesday after Trump raised the issue of Cruz's Canadian birth, and Cruz suggested his rival has jumped the shark.
Red wedding: Five killed in shootout during Eastern Cape nuptials

A manhunt has been launched after gunmen stormed a wedding in the Eastern Cape and opened fire on unsuspecting guests.
Édouard Manet, “Olympia” (1865)
Titian, “Reclining Venus” (1532)
Édouard Manet, “Olympia” (1865)
Shepherd Fairey
Shepherd Fairey
Banksy
Damien Hirst, Spot Paintings (1968--)
Damien Hirst, Spot Paintings (1968--)
Damien Hirst
Malevich, “Black Square” (1915)
“Black Square” as exhibited (1915)
HAPPY Thanksgiving